

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE VALLENCES SHEWN FROM
THE LANGUAGE OF PETER DAMIAN.

As the Romish Clergy, if we may believe their Bishop Atto of Vercelli, rejoiced in concubinage and a spurious progeny: so the Clergy of the Valdenses claimed and exercised their undoubted Christian right to enter into the holy estate of matrimony.

In the days of Jerome, as we have seen, the Bishops of the Cottian Alps even went so far as to refuse ordination save to already married candidates: and, in the middle of the eleventh century, or about a hundred years later than the time of Atto and his exemplary Priesthood, we find the Valdensic Clergy, in despite both of roman anger and of increasing superstition, still maintaining their liberty, and still preserving the wise custom of their forefathers*.

* With respect to the singular ecclesiastical arrangement mentioned by Jerome, when we recollect that he is speaking of the commencement of the fifth century, we may perhaps learn from history the reason of its adoption.

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Matrimony: for this spiritual usurper domineers over certain of her Grace's Clergy, with no less unrelenting tyranny than the literal Sisera ever afflicted the unhappy children of Israel. But relief is at hand. Let the Bishops in the borders of Deborah's territories, where the enormities of Sisera are the most atrocious, with Barak at their head, come to the rescue: and, while the archiepiscopal warrior deals with the husbands; let the ducal prophetess shew no mercy to the wives. Yet, forsooth, *wives* said I? Wives, I trow, they

men. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 16. There, associated with *directions to the confessors* which it were more decorous *not* to particularise, it still, as we all know, subsists in its entire baneful luxury.

Now, with such a case before them as that which had recently occurred at Constantinople, how would the pious Bishops and People of the primitive Valencs be likely to act, in order to prevent the inroads of profligacy and the occurrence of disgraceful scandals?

Why, just as Jerome tells us, they *did* act. Whether the lapse at Constantinople actually *produced* the valencs regulation, I shall not pretend to determine. But, in point of *fact*, we find it *subsisting* among the Cottian Bishops immediately after the occurrence of the lapse in question: and the recorded misconduct of Atto's unmarried Clergy in the neighbouring diocese of Vercelli, about the middle of the tenth century, would not afford to their successors any very strong inducement to patronise the ordinance of Clerical Celibacy. Truly, from their own Bishop's account of them, the unmarried Vercellese Priesthood would have been, to young women, a body of most edifying confessors.

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I. The account of them under this aspect is rendered doubly curious, by the amusing professional flattery offered upon the occasion to the Princess Adelaide; who appears, as Duchess of Savoy and as Marchioness of the Cottian Alps.

In the Epistle addressed to this great Lady by the blessed Peter Damian, Adelaide, under the hands of the courtly saint, is the Deborah of the day, while the less active Metropolitan of Turin performs the inferior part of the lagging Barak. The figurative Sisera, destined to be slain by the joint efforts of the united avengers, is Sacerdotal

In the reign of Theodosius and toward the close of the fourth century, one of those unhappy circumstances occurred, which, it is to be feared, too often disgrace and pollute the private confessionals of a young and unmarried Priesthood. The affair happened at Constantinople: and the sacerdotal culprit, who had thus been guilty of a profligate abuse of his office, was forthwith degraded. But husbands and fathers and brothers were not altogether satisfied with a punishment, which affected an *individual* only, while it left untouched the palpable evils and temptations attendant upon private confession *itself*. Nectarius, the Patriarch, was not a little perplexed what to do: but the Presbyter Eudemon wisely advised, what in the Greek Church was wisely adopted. Private confession to a Priest was abolished: and each person was freely admitted to the holy communion, according as, in the presence of God, he judged himself to be in a fit state of preparation. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. c. 19. Sozomen. Hist. Eccles. lib. vii. c. 16.

But, though abolished in the Greek Church, the mischievous and soul-tainting practice was still retained in the western Churches, and more especially in the Church of Rome. Sozo-

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are not, as holy Peter acutely argues: but females of a most ancient, though non-descript, character. *With Mary, God acknowledges virgins; with Anna, widows; with Susanna, wives; but who, I pray, are these? Since God owns them not, let them incontinently be turned out of the temple*.*.

Here I shall prudently stop: for the blessed writer's happy illustration of Sisera's enormity which immediately follows the dismissal of the unrecognised females from church, albeit address-

* Sunt nonnulli rectores Ecclesiarum, qui quodammodo tunc coruscare incipiunt, cum ad corrigenda mala subjectorum quasi zelo se ultionis accendunt: sed protinus extinguuntur; quia, qualibet adversitate fracti, vel torpore desidie resoluti, cito deficiunt. Unde et ille Barach, desidis ac resoluti pastoris figuram gerens, aiebat ad Deborah: *Si veneris mecum, vadam; si nolueris venire, non pergam*. Quapropter, sicut vir ille cum femina, Barach scilicet cum Debora, mutuis se fulcients auxiliis, contra Sisaram praelium susceperunt, cumque suis agminibus et nongentis falcatis curribus funditus debellarunt: ita et vos, tu scilicet et Taurinensis Episcopus, contra Sisaram luxurie ducem, arma corripite; eumque in filios Israel, hoc est, in Clericos Ecclesie, dominantem, miseratione pudicitie, jugulate. Quatenus et Episcopus, immo omnes Episcopi qui in administrationis tue finibus commorantur, sacerdotali Clericis disciplina coercant: et tu, in feminas, vigorem terrenae potestatis extendas. Tres quippe tantummodo feminas Deus novit. Quae his plures sunt, in ejus notitiam non venerunt. Novit enim virgines cum Maria; viduas, cum Anna; conjuges, cum Susanna. Illorum vero Clericorum feminas, qui matrimonia nequeunt legali jure contrahere, non conjuges, sed concubinas potius sive prostibula, congrue possumus appellare: ideoque, quia a Deo non merentur agnoscere, de templo Dei merentur excludi. B.

ed to the princely Adelaide, will be more honoured in its suppression than in its adduction.

II. The amount of the present evidence is this.

About the year 1050, there was, on the borders or marches of the Piedmontese Dominions, a pertinaciously married Clergy: and, neither the dila-

Petri. Damian. Oper. lib. vii. epist. 16 ad Adelaidem Ducissam, et Marchionissam Alpium Cottiarum, p. 339.

Shortly after this time or in the year 1074, the notorious Pope Gregory VII. attempted to enforce celibacy upon the Clergy of the hitherto independent Ambrosian Church of Milan. But those ecclesiastics rejected his decree, and branded him and his adherents as heretics. Annulph. Hist. Mediolan. lib. iv. c. 6, 9, 10, in M'Crie's Hist. of the Reform. in Italy, chap. i. p. 2.

Peter Damian was a literary character: *literaturæ peritus*, as William of Malmesbury speaks. Hence we shall not be surprised at the intellectual influence which he exercised over the mind of his contemporary Pope Leo IX. Of this influence, so creditable to Peter and so beneficial to the Pope, the historian gives an instance alike remarkable and edifying.

Two old women near Rome, noted sorceresses and in other respects also specially ill conditioned subjects, had caught an unlucky buffoon, and had metamorphosed him into an ass. In this unseemly disguise, they sold him to a rich citizen: the animal being warranted to possess most extraordinary powers of entertainment, and thence being admirably qualified to set the table on a roar and to promote the digestion of a liberal dinner. The apparent ass performed his part to the entire satisfaction of his purchaser: and his fame spread far and wide, until, at length, leaping into a pool of water, he suddenly recovered his pristine human figure.

Pope Leo heard the story from the late master of the ass:

lory Barak of Turin nor his Suffragan Bishops on the borders seeming to have much inclination for the task, Adelaide, as Marchioness of the Cottian Alps or as Lady-Warden of the Vallensic Boundary-District, is exhorted by Peter Damian to coerce and to punish them.

and the master himself had it from a trusty and wondering servant, confirmed also by the actual confession of the two mischievous old women. His holiness, however, notwithstanding such undeniable evidence to the fact, was somewhat sceptical: but his literary friend, Peter Damian, by a clever inductive argument from the true feats of Simon Magus as performed at Rome, convinced him that the tale was no less correct than strange.

Dubitantem Papam confirmat Petrus Damianus *literaturæ peritus*. Non mirum, si hæc fieri possunt: productoque exemplo de Simone Mago, qui Faustinianum in Simonis figura videri et a filiis horri fecit, instructiorem de cætero in talibus reddidit. Gul. Malmes. Gent. Anglor. Continuat. lib. ii. c. 15.

The case of the Golden Ass of Apuleius, whence indeed the figment has evidently been plagiarised, would have afforded a more exact parallel: but Peter, I suppose, deemed it not so solid a basis whereupon to construct an argument.